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AMONG QUEER PEOPLE.

IN TWO PARTS—CHAPTER I.

ALONG the Yorkshire coast lie large estates of crown-lands, stray vestiges of that still more considerable property which once belonged to our rulers, when England itself was a kind of royal homestead—a palace and a park. These lands are now divided into farms, the occupants of which (begging their pardon), are most likely the descendants of the old crown serfs; at anyrate, they are the successors of a long line of tenants who have from time immemorial occupied those holdings. When any repairs are needed, application has to be made to the local officials, and through them transmitted to London, when, after large quantities of red tape have been expended, a 'survey' is ordered. The 'report' made is sent in to certain mysterious Royal Commissioners, and then, as I was given to understand, nothing further is done; until, indeed, on the application of the next race of occupiers, more red tape is used by the succeeding tribe of clerks, upon which the then existing commissioners order a further survey; as a result of that, a subsequent report is made, and again—nothing is done!

In the year 18—, I was just completing my indentures in an eminent surveyor's office in London. Our principal had some vague relations with these mysterious Royal Commissioners; and late on the afternoon of a dull autumn day, I was startled by receiving instructions to set out for Yorkshire, almost on the instant, upon this mythical business. After a long and cold night-journey in the guards' vans of luggage-trains, and over cross-country railways, on the engines of black lines of coal-trucks, I found myself, about seven o'clock the next morning, at a little toy of a station, stuck under a tall hill, where was a man in a cart awaiting me. He was fatter than any two mortal beings put together I had ever seen before, and appeared to be stupid in proportion, but I learned he had attended with his vehicle in pursuance of orders to that effect from the Steward's Office. Away we went jolting through a country which had the appearance

of being in a state of siege. High embankments, from the tops of some of which huddled flocks of sheep looked at us, and deep ditches, black with shining water, cut up the land in all directions.

'It wor t' keep a't the sea,' my fat guide at length informed me, after I had made the inquiry about a dozen times. At length we pulled up before a sort of barn-building, in one end of which I found my silent friend kept a 'public,' which, to judge from the extent of the accommodation it could furnish, or the apparent contiguity of population, was as nearly a private house as it could well be. Inside, however, all was scrupulously clean; and I was very thankful to sit down to the plain but wholesome breakfast which was quickly placed on the table. During the meal, the fat man attentively surveyed me from a seat opposite, I at first thought, for the purpose of counting the mouthfuls with an eye to the bill; but the poor opinion he, at the finish, expressed of my consuming capacity, set me right upon that point. I had noticed a look of compassion overspreading his wide expanse of countenance since our first greeting, and now the corners of his huge lips went down in the most touching manner. After the breakfast was over, upon my intimating, in the fewest possible words, that I wished to have water and soap to freshen myself up a little, my host rolled before me through a doorway, not, as I had expected, into a bedroom, but into an open yard at the back of the premises. Here, at the fat man's summons, a rough-looking girl presented herself. She seemed to be the only other inmate of the barn. Pouring some rain-water into a broken bucket, she set the vessel on a low wall, placing a lump of soap beside it, and then, as silently as the fat man (who had retired), and with just the same expression on her face, she took up a position and surveyed me. I could not stand this! I was not responsible for this young woman's moral principles, nor for her behaviour in any way, but I had a reluctance to divesting myself of a great portion of my habiliments, and proceeding to my ablutions in her presence.

'Well?' I began.

'Weel!' she replied.

'When you've done your observation, and taken yourself off, I shall wash myself.'

'Sha'al 'ee!'

I had thought I had spoken pretty plainly on my part, but it seemed I was still too refined for the intellect of those parts. I would try again.

'What are you staring at me for!'

'I wa'anted to see wot you wur loike. We'n bin expectin' you.' A grin for the first time appeared on the maiden's features.

'Have you? That's all right, I dare say. You mean you had heard some one was coming to survey the farms?'

'Ees, an' you bin a decent-lookin' chap. They shud ha' sent sumbody else.'

'I don't understand you,' said I, for this observation puzzled me. The first remark was agreeable, but what followed was mysterious. 'What do you mean?' I inquired.

'Oh, nowt; it be a' roight; bur you'n know soon encaaf.'

'Very well; then go into the house, so that I can wash myself.'

'I dinnot stop 'ee,' was the reply.

'My good girl,' I said, 'there's the door,' pointing to it, that there might be no mistake this time. 'Now, go; or if not, I shall put you out,' and I made a step towards her.

'I'll goo, as 'ee seems fur t' wish it loike. Thee beest a good-looking chap, an' I hope they wunner mark 'ee.' With this vague observation, she passed within.

What did it mean? Mark me! Who or what mark me! How, and for what purpose? And what had any supposed good looks on my part to do with disqualifying myself for this errand? What did the fat man's commiseration signify? and now, why did this rough creature say that somebody else should have been sent? Time, however, pressed; and taking off my upper clothes, I plunged face and head into the refreshing cold water, conscious all the time that the girl, from a small window, was closely observing the process.

I hurried my proceedings so as to quit this strange dwelling at the earliest possible moment. It had been arranged, I found, that I was to have a horse to carry myself and my instruments in my quest of the farms—three in number; and as I had a rough map of the neighbourhood, with the roads marked on it, all was clear before me. The nag, a tight little animal (they are proud of their horses in Yorkshire), had been in the meantime got ready by the fat man, and was waiting at the door. I was soon in the saddle, but I half lingered for a moment, for the look of commiseration on my host's face was most striking. Just as I had settled my instruments behind me, and was picking up the reins, he waddled out of the doorway into the road, and thus broke silence: 'If I wur 'ee, I wud nur goo to Stimson's pla'ce till dinner-toime. It'll be a bit o' a way further ra'nd, bur it be their best toime. You doo it; they wunner be soo bad as earlier ner later.'

'Who won't be so bad?' I shouted from the saddle, for he had turned about, and was waddling back towards the barn-door. 'What do you mean by all this—you and the girl? Who is it won't be so bad?'

'Them,' he indefinitely answered over his huge shoulder, pausing upon the threshold.

'I tell you what, my man, I'll know more of this,' and I quickly wheeled the horse round. 'Now, what does this mystery mean?'

'Weel, I wish 'ee wur safe back agen; that be the wost I wish 'ee, soo thee need ner tak' on airs, mon!' saying which, the bulky creature passed inside, and the door was slammed in my startled horse's face. There was nothing for it, so I turned about, and trotted off.

CHAPTER II.

It was a fine bracing morning, and the conversations with the fat man and the girl had sufficiently taken away my drowsiness. I was still perplexed by their strange observations; but my spirits freshened with the ride, and I grew cheerful again. The country was still in a state of siege, and frequent references to my map were requisite to trace out the way betwixt the deep fosses and the high earth-walls. I was about four miles from the first farm I had to call at, the others being about five miles distant each from that, but in opposite directions; so that if I took Stimson's second, instead of first or last, as the fat man had suggested, I should go at least a couple of miles further round before my return to the barn where I was expected to sleep that night. 'It is very odd,' I said to myself, as I rode on, 'but the man and the girl both seemed friendly to me, and they must have some reasons for their curious remarks. I'll not be self-willed, but will act on their hint, and throw the couple of miles away.' My little horse picked up his heels well; and by the time we had got part way through a small wood, we had to go through, my thoughts were so distracted by the perfect swarms of game of nearly all kinds rushing about in the under-brush, that I had lost all apprehension.

A huddle of low buildings, marked on my map as Jackson's Farm, were now in sight, and this being one of the three properties I had to survey, I diverged from the main road up a by-path in that direction. Trit-trot went the nag's heels, and merrily I whistled, as if all was right. I opened a white gate to enter a large badly-fenced yard at the front of the premises, and no sooner had I done so than I was nearly pitched head-foremost out of the saddle. A hunting-pack might have opened mouth—I never heard such baying, yelping, and howling in my life! Seven or eight large hounds, in as many kennels ranged immediately before the house, had rushed out, and with yawning red mouths, were tugging and straining at the ends of their respective chains like hell-dogs. The chains, however, held firm; and I got out of the saddle as quickly as I could, and tried to pacify the frightened horse. The infernal chorus kept on, but still nobody came out of the house. I backed through the gate, and walking the horse along out of sight of the dogs, I fastened him to a rail, and then returned.

'Wa'at dost 'ee wa'ant?' came now in a shrill voice, just audible among the renewed roar of the hounds, and the words appeared to be repeated in a sharp echo. Looking up, I was startled to see two women leaning half-way through adjoining upper windows of the low house. Perhaps there might have been nothing very alarming in that, had I not observed that the one I first saw had a gun in her hand, very accurately pointed in my direction; then, hastily glancing from her to the other,

I observed that she too was armed with a sort of blunderbuss.

'I'm come to survey the farm,' I shouted back above the roar of the dogs.

'Heer till un! I'll farm 'ee, if 'ee arn't off. We'n loose th' whelps till 'ee,' yelled back the elder woman—the one in the eastern window.

'Ay, we'n farm 'ee. Oot on him Spot, na' Flyer!' screamed the other, advancing her weapon further through the casement.

'Is Mr Jackson at home?' I called, as soon as the dogs had a little exhausted themselves.

'Noo, he beent, an' I dessay thee knowest thot wull eneaft. It wur on'y last weak th' Hill Grange wur robbed. Off wi' 'ee!' The elder female then looked to the priming of her gun.

'Mun I gie him a cha'arge o' th' duck-shot?' shrilly inquired the other. I began to have an idea of what the girl at the fat man's meant by 'marking.'

'Do you know Mr B——?' I asked, after a moment's pause, during which I had judiciously got the gate-post betwixt us.

'Wha'at, th' steward?'

'Yes.'

'Oo coorse, we dun.'

'Haan't he been here within a day or two, talking to your father, or brother, or husband, or whatever Mr Jackson is?'

'Ee wur heer last weak,' shouted back the elder. 'Bur keep thy distance, mon,' and the gun was instantly raised, for I had ventured to emerge from the shelter of the post.

'Didn't he leave word that somebody was coming down from London, to see what repairs wanted doing?'

'I niver heerd nowt about it.'

'Nur I, an' mebbe it be a' lie,' added the younger siren.

'Repairs dost 'ee say! Theer's bin nowt dun i' a'ar toime, nur i' th' owd granny's afore us. It divn't sa'and loikely, lad.'

'I think we'd'n bether loose th' dogs till un,' suggested the other.

'Is there nobody else about the premises?' I shouted in despair.

'Wa'at's thot to 'ee? Dost 'ee wa'ant know if we be a couple o' lone wimmin, eh? Ha, lad, th' dogs an' thees' [pointing to the guns] 'wull be eneaft fur 'ee. Thot thees' I foind!'

'Ha! let un put a foot intil th' ya'ard!' threatened the younger.

'No, no,' I roared back; 'I don't want to know anything of the sort. But if there is anybody else about you, ask them whether they've heard anything of a surveyor coming. Then I'll go.'

A few remarks were now exchanged between the two, but though the dogs had exhausted themselves from a continuous bark into a dropping yelp, I could distinguish nothing. The result, however, I saw was partly favourable, for the elder female withdrawing her gun, called out: 'I'll goo an' speak to Kit; bur 'ee stop wheer 'ee beest; saying which, she disappeared from the window.

'If un doon't, 'ee'll ha' a qua'arter o' an ounce o' lead-shot in 'un,' firmly remarked the other.

I remained close beside the gate-post, without stirring a foot, for the younger of the two viragos seemed by much the fiercer, and the blunderbuss was always at the present. In about five minutes, perhaps, although at the time it seemed to me to

be five mortal hours, a door at the end of the low range of buildings partly opened, and the woman who had withdrawn from the window pushed outside a red-headed lad, who stood staring at me across the yard in the wildest manner.

'Heer settle 'em,' said the female, next handing a broken flail through the half-opened door. This seemed to have a reference to the dogs, who had now set up a more terrific yelling than ever, for the red-headed youth shook himself up, and turning the corner, impartially administered to each hound he was fortunate enough to catch before it could get back into the kennel, a frightful blow with the bludgeon. Thus driven to their holes, they appeared to be so far 'settled' that the noise somewhat subsided.

'Kit says 'ee heerd th' meastur say summut aba'at it,' now shouted the woman. 'An' 'ee mayst doo wa'at 'ee wull a'taside, bur ef 'ee tries t' coom in, it'll be wos fur 'ee.'

With this the door closed, leaving the red-headed Kit outside of it. This was better than being wholly beaten, and I hurried across the yard, more desirous to escape from these premises than I had been from the barn public. I got the lad to hold one end of my measuring-tape, and very soon had taken the outside dimensions of the premises; and then, by dint of hard questioning, I got from Kit the number and position of the rooms inside.

'Th' meastur be gon' to Yoork aba'at sum bishness,' the young gentleman explained; 'an' they,' nodding towards the house, 'niver wull let onybody in when 'ee be a'at.'

'Keep un a'at o' th' stable,' shouted one of the fierce voices from above, as I crossed towards that out-building. 'Keep a'taside, as 'ee wost bid; theer be a road theer untill th' kitchen.'

'Loase Jump, if 'ee goas in,' added the other; and looking up, I saw the two females again at the windows on the watch, each with her weapon advanced from the casement.

'I've done,' I hastily answered; 'but you cannot expect the repairs to be thorough inside, with such an incomplete survey as this.'

'Repairs! Be ashamed o' thyself! Noobody heer iver expects onythin' o' th' sort.'

'Hast 'ee coom a' th' way from Lunnun t' tell us lies? Theer be plenty o' thoos tow'd i' Ya'arksheer,' bawled the other.

'Tell 'em build us a new pla'ace, wilt un? Thot's th' on'y way o' repairin' it,' added the former speaker. And that was about the truth, for a more tumble-down place I have rarely seen; but without staying to say as much, or indeed to say anything, I hastened back towards the gate.

'See un safe off, Kit,' both voices shouted; and Kit accordingly, as I started for my horse, followed close at my heels, the dogs rushing again out of the kennels, as if they wished to follow too.

'Which is the nearest way to Stimson's—by this path?' I asked, when I had remounted.

'He, he, he! Beest 'ee gooin' theer an' a'?' and the youth lifted first one foot and then another in a clumsy dance, in evident delight.

'Yes; and what is there to amuse you in that?'

'Ecod, thee'l foind 'em rummier than thees!' he replied in a gratified manner, scratching his red head.

'Shall I? Then I don't think they ought to be at large, and you may tell your mistresses so, Kit, if you like. But how shall I find them "rummier"?''

'Moind us they dunner mark un, thot's a'!' he mysteriously added, turning back for the gate.

Mark me! I looked after the youth with the intention of further inquiries, but the two females were still, with their weapons presented, at their respective windows; and leaving the red-headed Kit grinning at me, as he swung to upon the gate inside, I put heels to my horse, and was glad soon to hear the baying of the hounds grow fainter behind me in the distance.

CHAPTER III.

The conviction was forced upon me that the inhabitants of these parts were very queer people; and but for fear of the merriment of the other clerks in the London office (more that, I think, than awe of the Royal Commissioners), I should, I believe, have turned the horse's head about the other way. But as it was, I struck up another whistle, and put my steed into a gallop. A little more than half an hour's brisk riding among the ditch-divided fields shewed me Stimson's holding—a big cottage, with clustered out-buildings, on a sloping ground. There was nothing formidable in its appearance, I thought to myself, and I pushed on. I could see a man on the ridge of a stack, at one end of the premises, and several other figures moving about near the same spot. As soon as I was caught sight of, a series of shouts were set up by these latter, which sounded like a faint imitation of the dogs I had left behind. I had not got more than half-way down the lane leading to the farm, before, running to meet me in front, and leaping over the walls at the side, came no fewer than five of the Stimsons, the eldest perhaps thirty, and the youngest, say eighteen. They literally took possession of both myself and the horse—seizing the reins, holding on at the stirrups, fingering my instruments on the saddle behind; and amid a babel of cries, uttered in the broadest Yorkshire dialect, of which I could not understand a tithe, I and the horse were pushed up the lane. As we proceeded, I surveyed my captors critically. They were very dirty in their skin and clothes, and I need not say rough in their manners, and there was a startling wildness in their eyes. It also seemed curious to see the three elder ones, the youngest of whom was considerably over twenty, jumping and shouting like boys of eight. But what struck me most of all was this, that their faces were all more or less scarred, and one or two were minus fingers off their hands. Had this any relation to the 'marking' I had been warned of? I found myself nervously speculating. Still, there was nothing very alarming in their conduct as yet, and I laughed back again, and tried to enter into talk; but it appeared, judging from the way in which my remarks were received, that my speech was quite as unintelligible to them as theirs was to me, and so the attempt at conversation proved a failure. The horse, too, was continually curvetting and dancing, startled by the group's rough handling, and I had nearly as much as I could do to retain my seat. How the mob about me avoided being kicked or trampled on, is a matter of surprise to me at this moment.

'Tak' your hands off the gent an' his 'oss, wull ye?' shouted an elderly man, leaning upon a low wall; and from his resemblance to the younger ones, I at once knew he was Stimson the elder.

'Good-day,' I remarked, dismounting. 'I am

come to survey your place. Will you let one of your sons take my horse and give it a feed?'

'Ay, if they wun, they may. You hear'n wa'at's said,' he went on. 'Goo un on you.' They had arranged themselves in a sort of ring round about, but no one of them stirred.

'Here, my lad, will you take the horse, and give him a handful o' hay and a drink o' water?' I mildly inquired, addressing the youngest-looking of the five.

'He, he, he!' came by way of reply; and this horrible ejaculation was taken up one by one, in strictly progressive order, until the whole ring was he-he-he-ing around me and the prick-eared horse.

'I know'd they wud nur. They be a lot o' the darndest whelps as iver a mon had,' and coming round the corner of the wall, hitting right and left with his fists among them, the father of the said whelps himself snatched the reins out of my hand, and marched off with the animal. But now some sudden change came over his children, for the next instant he was surrounded, and after a short skirmish, in which uplifted arms were mingled as in a riot, the elder Stimson was left behind on the ground, in a half-recumbent position, and his progeny, in a sort of crowd, conveyed the kicking horse off towards the hovel of a stable. I never expected to see the animal alive again. Picking himself up, and swearing horribly as he did so, the man came back dusting his clothes.

'They be a darned queer lot, meastur,' was his paternal observation. 'Weel, sha'an we ha' th' pla'ce fettled up a bit this toime, dost 'ee think?' he at once continued, apparently quite dismissing the other strange incident altogether.

'Yes, I think so; I was told before leaving London the Commissioners really meant it this time.'

'It wur gone o'er i' moy fayther's toime, bur nuthin' coom on it. It be a noice dog-hole, beent it?' and turning about, he looked at the premises with an air of disgust, winding up with another volley of oaths.

'The place needs rebuilding, from all I can see, and so I shall report,' I answered, wishing to mollify his ferocity.

'Heer they bin comin', he said, alluding to his mob of sons, who were loudly quarrelling among themselves, as they re-issued from the stable-door. 'We had bether poot a' thees things a'at o' seeght, fur they be wos than us'al to-day, thot they be.' With this remark, the old man hurriedly picked up an axe, lying near a wood-chopping block, and next snatched up a couple of pitchforks reared against the fence. Putting them upon his shoulder, he nimbly mounted a ladder resting against the stack, threw them on the top, and having hastily descended, lowered the ladder to the ground, where he left it. 'Theer, much harm wunner be done na'; bur they sartinly be very bad to-day.'

I could only stare at the man, wondering what on earth all this meant. The group of youths again drew near: what had they done with the horse? I asked myself. Again they became silent, and re-forming into a ring about us, gazed with their wild eyes upon me. 'I shall want somebody to hold my measuring-tape at the other end for me,' I remarked, turning from one to another. No one moved a step, and I listened for the previous 'He, he, he'; but this time it did not come.

'It be noo use axin' 'em onythin' na', I con see,'

observed the old man, once more using his fists in all directions. 'Coom along, an' let us ger it o'er afore wos happens, wilt 'ee?' and he held out his own dirty hand for the tape. I was as anxious as he could be to get it all over, and I did not keep him waiting. We set off to commence the measurement from the nearest gable, the whole five following close at our heels, and now beginning to giggle again among themselves. The old man, of course, had to walk away to some distance with his end of the tape, and his sons did me the honour to devote themselves to me. Whenever I had occasion to turn my back, or to stoop, I was fully conscious that the roughest pranks were going on at my expense. The trampling of heavy feet in wild rushes to and fro, and sudden explosions of loud laughter, kept me in perpetual apprehension. At length, upon rising from a basement measurement, I found a heavy brick had been noiselessly placed between my shoulders; soon after that, I was, without the slightest warning, pinned up against the wall, without seeing who did it; and, finally, while stooping, I was pushed clean over, with a couple of their heavy carcasses resting on me. All this time the old man was yelling or throwing stones at them, and now and then he diversified these attentions by rushing up, and having a close skirmish with the fists. I took it all in good part, for, indeed, what else could be done with that mob? and pretending to laugh it off, I hurried on with my work. A good part of the measurements, I fear, were anything but accurate. By and by, I had done all, except taking the dimensions of a kind of dovecot over the barn.

'I shall want the ladder for that,' I said.

'I think 'ee had bether leave thot be to-day,' the old man answered, coming towards me.

'Th' ladder!' shouted all his five sons in the highest glee; and this time, all unasked, there was a race who should first bring what was wanted.

'Moind wa'at thee beest aba't, an' keep a' eye on 'em,' old Stimson very significantly remarked, as the ladder was almost instantly raised with a clatter against the gable.

I began to resolve in my own mind to guess this measurement, but I was suddenly pushed forward from behind to the ladder's foot, and had forthwith to commence climbing, to keep my shins from being broken against the rungs. Up I went, and the higher I ascended, the louder became the ironical applause, and the whole terrible five began dancing at the bottom like Red Indians. I had just applied my two-foot rule to the gable-wall, when the ladder began to oscillate; glancing down in alarm, I was horrified to see the fiends all struggling with the old man in an attempt to overturn it.

'Da'an wi' you, ur you'll be killed!' he shouted, purple in the face from his exertions to defeat their infernal plan. I was fascinated, and could only listen to their yells, and watch their endeavours.

'I con howd on noo lunge,' the old man shouted; 'if you wuner coom, you mun tak' wa't follers;' and loosing his hold of the ladder, he staggered away exhausted. With a fiercer shout than ever, they shook the ladder, first this way, and then that, and the next instant it was whirled right over, and coming back the other way, crushed me against the gable. I fortunately had in some way slipped my feet through the steps, and so clung on without falling; but I saw,

to my dismay, that though the fiends had rushed a few yards away, to avoid, I suppose, my falling upon them, they were returning. Over the ladder went again, back into its first position, and the shock nearly dislocated my limbs. Another shout greeted this further stage of the performance, and I felt the oscillation recommencing for one crash more. There were a number of brick-holes in the wall, either for the pigeons, or else for ventilating purposes, and in my despair, quick as thought, I leaned sideways, and thrusting my arms through a couple of these holes, the ladder swung away, leaving me hanging spread out against that gable-wall like a hawk nailed on a barn-door. A moment's silence, and then a wilder yell than before hailed this; but sharp cracks, resembling the reports of a pistol, succeeded, and turning, as well as I could, my horrified glance over my shoulder, I saw the old man lashing my persecutors away with cuts on the head and face from a cart-whip.

'Howd on!' he roared to me, rushing into the stable, from whence he the next moment emerged with an armful of straw. This he repeated twice, until I could keep my hold no longer; the muscles of my arms were cracking, and down I came upon the straw-heap. It broke the fall more than I had expected it would, and, after turning a somersault, I found I was not shocked much, but my wrists and ankles were grazed sadly. As soon as I was on my legs again, the five rushed up, dancing and grinning, as if it had been one of the best jokes ever witnessed.

'Th' meal be ready, dinnot ye heer?' at this instant called out a cracked female voice, and in the doorway of the house appeared an elderly woman. She looked just as dirty as the rest, and her dress was, if possible, worse—dragged, and even ragged. She had a surprising resemblance to both the father and the sons, and I at first concluded she must be aunt to the five; but a moment afterwards she was mentioned by one of them as 'mother.'

'You mun coom in an' ha' a bit wi' us,' the old man said. 'Coom along; you got o'er thot pratty weel, fur I thowt at one time you wud ha' bin killed.'

My firm intention was to hurry to the stable, get out my horse, if it was still alive, and ride from that infernal place as fast as heels could carry me; but I was again instantly surrounded by the mob, and hustled on towards the house.

'Who bin 'ee?' asked the woman, staring in my direction.

'Th' surveyin' gent from Lunnun,' the old man replied, and all the five 'he-he'd' at that.

'Bring un along; we con foind un a bit o' summut.'

Before I had time to utter a word in the way of answer, I was pushed through the doorway.

'Dinnot let th' lads ha' nuthin' bur spoons, mothur, to-day; they be dredful bad, they bin, the father shouted.

This was partly explained a moment afterwards, when we entered a low, ill-lighted room, in which a table, without any cloth upon it, had plates arranged on it as if for dinner, by the woman making a dash at the knives and forks, and hurrying them away into a drawer, after which she supplied their absence, so far as the five were concerned, by great wooden spoons. Everybody was seated

instantly; and as the woman came to me with a knife and fork, she said quite loud enough to be heard by all: 'Dinnot 'ee let 'em ger howd on 'em,' nodding towards the five, who were noisily pushing and nudging each other like school-lads. A great dish of Yorkshire pudding was first placed upon the table by the woman, and instantly a forest of wooden spoons clattered down on it with a noise like hail. In less than twenty seconds, there was not a morsel left in the dish—every atom of it had been transferred to the five's plates. The woman, with little apparent surprise, went round to them quickly, one by one, and snatched back with a fork such pieces as she could harpoon, which she put back upon the dish, from which, without a word spoken, she then helped me, and afterwards herself and the old man. For the next course, the woman lifted out of a pot still boiling over the fire a huge piece of bacon, followed by a dish of potatoes roasted in their jackets. There was not such a struggle this time, for the bacon required to be cut up, which, again, was done by the woman, and this time I was helped from the dishes directly, and not from the others' plates. The five were, however, all the time yelling and clattering, now and then having a battle of spoons, which they banged most recklessly about one another's heads. Not a word in the way of conversation was attempted, excepting this be considered as such: 'Ees, we neerly did fur 'ee upo' th' ladder,' grinned the eldest but one of the five, who sat facing me.

'That you did. But you should not have shaken it quite so hard,' I answered as gaily as I could, pretending to eat away, though appetite was out of the question.

'Noo, it wur nur haf eeneaff. Bur thee stuck on, thee did, eh!' remarked a younger one.

'Wa'at whait fingers un has got!' after a lengthy pause, observed the one sitting next to me, who had a broken nose, and appeared to be about twenty-three or twenty-four years old.

'Ah, you see I don't work in the fields,' I answered.

'Wilt 'ee lend me thoy knoife a bit?' he went on.

'Dinnot you doo nowt o' th' soort,' put in the woman; 'ur un 'll be up to summut.'

'He, he, he! I wud ha' had one o' thoy whait fingers off in a jiffey!' said the fiend with a broad grin.

There did not appear to be anything else for dinner; and as soon as I saw the plates were emptied, I hinted that I must leave, for I had another farm to visit. No opposition was offered; and rising, I bade the woman, who was now busy again about the fire, a hurried good-bye, to which she made no response whatever, and I was soon very glad to find myself in the open air of the yard again. I was beginning to speculate as to what they might not have done with the horse, when I saw the old man leading it out of the stable, looking all right. The five had gathered about my instruments, and old Stimson had to fight (I myself exchanged a few blows) before he could recover all of them for me.

'Weel, considerin' how they bin to-day, I think you ha' got off pratty tidy,' he said, as he held the stirrup while I mounted. 'Aba't the repairs, I dinnot care much whether they dun 'em ur not; the owd pla'ace 'll last my toime, an' hurs,' jerking his head towards the house; 'an' afther we bin goon,

thees uns,' indicating the grinning mob, 'll soon kill un anuther off.'

'And the sooner the better,' I could not refrain from answering as I gathered up the reins, 'for I never was among such an abominable'—

A shower of the largest and most accurately-directed missiles I had ever received, commenced falling thickly at that moment, several striking both myself and the animal. Putting spurs to the horse, I dashed down the lane for my life. It took me, at the least, three hundred yards at a stiff gallop before I was quite out of range, and at the last glimpse I had of the five they were on the top of a high embankment, waving their arms against the sky, and yelling like mad—the yelping of the dogs at Jackson's was harmonious music compared with that. I fully understood now the commiserating expression on the features of the fat man and the girl at the public; and pulling up to wipe the sweat from my face, and to pat my breathed horse, I hesitated much whether or not to go on to the third farm. Stimson's, however, I argued with myself, was the only place I had been warned against, and I did not wish to be laughed at in London; so I turned into the broad road by the left, and spurred into a trot. Little did I guess what was before me.

THERMOMETERS.

AN ordinary thermometer consists, as everybody knows, of a glass-tube, fixed to a scale. This tube contains a fine bore, and has a bulb blown at one extremity. Some liquid, generally mercury or alcohol, is introduced into the tube, the air is driven out, and the tube is sealed. The quantity of fluid, say mercury, admitted into the tube is so regulated, that at common temperatures the bulb and a portion of the bore are filled. The remainder of the bore, which is empty, affords space for the mercury to rise. This arrangement renders very perceptible the alterations in the volume of the mercury due to changes of temperature, a very slight increase or diminution of volume causing the mercury to rise or to fall appreciably in the fine bore. After sealing, the scale has to be adjusted to the tube, and the instrument is complete.

Thermometers of the most accurate make are called standard thermometers. In their manufacture, numerous precautions are necessary from the very outset. Even in so simple a matter as the choice of the tube of glass, much care is requisite. The bore has to be tested, in order to insure that it is of uniform capacity throughout. It is found that tubes, as they come from the glass-house, contain a bore wider at one extremity than the other. The bore is, in fact, a portion of a very elongated cone. In a hundredweight of tubes, not more than half-a-dozen or so can be picked out in which the bore is perfectly true. The bore is tested in a very ingenious, though simple manner. A bulb is blown, and a very small quantity of mercury is admitted into the tube, about as much as will fill an inch and a half of the bore. By alternately cooling and heating the bulb, this delicate thread of mercury is driven from one end of the tube to the other, and during this process its length is carefully measured in all parts of the tube. Should the length of the mercury alter in various situations, it is evident that the capacity

of the bore is not uniform throughout, and the tube must be rejected. In blowing the bulb, an elastic ball, containing air, is used. The ordinary method of blowing glass-bulbs by means of the breath, is found to cause the introduction of moisture into the tube.

The size of the bulb has next to be considered. A large bulb renders the instrument slow in its indications of change, owing to the quantity of mercury that has to be acted on. On the other hand, if the bulb is too small, it will not contain sufficient mercury to register high temperatures, unless the bore is exceedingly fine.

The shape of the bulb is of importance. Spherical bulbs are best adapted to resist the varying pressure of the atmosphere; while cylindrical bulbs expose larger surfaces of mercury, and are therefore preferred for more delicate instruments. Various plans have been suggested in order to obtain thermometers of extreme sensitiveness for delicate experiments. Some have been made with very small thin bulbs, to contain a very small quantity of mercury; but in these the indicating column is generally so fine, that it can only be read by the aid of a powerful lens. Instruments have been contrived with spiral or coiled tubular bulbs; but the thickness of glass required to keep these in shape nullifies the effect sought to be obtained—namely, instantaneous action. Messrs Negretti and Zambra, the well-known meteorological instrument-makers, have recently succeeded in constructing a thermometer which combines sensitiveness and quickness of action, and which presents a good visible column. The bulb of this thermometer is of a gridiron form. The reservoir is made of glass, so thin that it cannot be blown; it can only be formed by means of a spirit-lamp; yet its shape gives it such rigidity that its indications are not affected by altering its position or by standing it on its bulb. The reservoirs of the most delicate of these instruments contain about nine inches of excessively thin cylindrical glass, the outer diameter of which is not more than the twentieth of an inch, and, owing to the large surface thus presented to the air, the indications are positively instantaneous. This form of thermometer was constructed expressly to meet the requirements of scientific balloon ascents, to enable the observer to take thermometric readings at precise elevations. It was contemplated to procure a metallic thermometer; but on the production of this perfect instrument, the idea was abandoned.

The shape and size of the bulb having been determined, the workman next proceeds to fill the tube. This is effected by heating the bulb while the open end of the tube is embedded in mercury. Upon allowing the bulb to cool, the atmospheric pressure drives some mercury into the tube. The process is continued until sufficient mercury has entered. The mercury used in filling should be quite pure, and should have been freed from moisture and air by recent boiling. It is again boiled in the tube after filling; and when the expulsion of air and moisture is deemed complete, and while the mercury fills the tube, the artist dexterously removes it from the source of heat, and at the same moment closes it with the flame of a blow-pipe. It sometimes happens that in spite of every care a little air still remains in the tube. Its presence is detected by inverting the tube, when, if the mercury falls to the extremity (or

nearly so) of the bore, some air is present, which, of course, must be removed.

The thermometer, after being filled, has to be graduated. Common thermometers are fixed to a scale on which the degrees are marked; but the graduation of standards is engraved on the stem itself, in order to insure the greatest possible accuracy. The first steps in graduating are to ascertain the exact freezing-point and the exact boiling-point, and to mark on the tube the height of the mercury at these points. The freezing-point can be determined with comparative ease. Melting ice has always the same temperature in all places and under all circumstances, provided only that the water from which the ice is congealed is pure. The bulb and the lower portion of the tube are immersed in melting ice; the mercury descends; the point where it remains stationary is the freezing-point, and is marked on the tube.

The determination of the boiling-point is more difficult. The boiling-point varies with the pressure of the atmosphere. The normal boiling temperature of water is fixed at a barometric pressure of 29.922 inches of mercury having the temperature of melting ice, in the latitude of 45°, and at the level of the sea. Of course, these conditions rarely if ever co-exist; and consequently the boiling-point has to be corrected for errors, and reduced for latitude. Tables of vapour tension, as they are called, computed from accurate experiments, are used for this purpose. Regnault's tables, the most recent, are considered the best.

An approximate boiling-point is first obtained by actual experiment. A copper boiler is used, which has at its top an open cylinder two or three inches in diameter, and of sufficient length to allow a thermometer to be introduced into it, without touching the water in the boiler. The cylinder is surrounded by a second one, fixed to the top of the boiler, but not entering it, the two being about an inch apart. The outer cylinder is intended to protect the inner one from contact with the cold external air. The thermometer to be graduated is placed in the inner cylinder, and held there by a thong of india-rubber. As the vapour of the boiling water rises from the boiler into the cylinder, it envelops the thermometer, and causes the mercury to ascend. As the mercury rises, the tube is gradually lowered, so as to keep the top of the mercury just visible above the cylinder. When the mercury becomes stationary, the position of the top of the column is marked on the tube; and the boiling-point, subject to corrections for errors, is obtained.

The freezing and boiling points being determined, the scale is applied by dividing the length between the two points into a certain number of equal degrees. This operation is performed by a machine called a dividing-engine, which engraves degrees of any required width with extreme accuracy.

The scale used in the United Kingdom, in the British colonies, and in North America, is that known as Fahrenheit's. Fahrenheit was a philosophical instrument-maker of Amsterdam. About the year 1724, he invented the scale with which his name is associated. The freezing-point of his scale is 32 degrees, the boiling-point 212 degrees, and the intermediate space is composed of 180 degrees. This peculiar division was thus derived. The lowest cold observed in Iceland was the zero of Fahrenheit. When the thermometer stood at

zero, it was calculated to contain a volume of mercury represented by the figures 11,124. When plunged into melting snow, the mercury expanded to a volume represented by 11,156; hence the intermediate space was divided into thirty-two equal portions or degrees, and thirty-two was taken as the freezing-point of water.* Similarly, at the boiling-point, the quicksilver expanded to 11,336. Fahrenheit's scale is convenient in some respects. The meteorological observer is seldom troubled with negative signs, the divisions of the scale are numerous, and tenths of degrees give all the minuteness usually requisite.

In 1742, Celsius, a Swede, proposed zero for the freezing-point, and 100 degrees for the boiling-point, all temperatures below freezing being distinguished by the negative sign (—). This scale is known as the Centigrade. It is in use in France, Sweden, and in the south of Europe; it has the advantage of decimal notation, with the disadvantage of the negative sign.

Reaumur's scale is in use in Spain, Switzerland, and Germany. It differs from the Centigrade in this, that the freezing and boiling points are separated by 80 degrees instead of 100 degrees.

It would not be difficult to construct a scale which should combine all the advantages of Fahrenheit's and of the Centigrade. Freezing-point should be fixed at 100 degrees; and boiling-point should be fixed at as many hundred divisions or degrees above 100 degrees as might be agreed on by practical men as most convenient. The advantages of decimal notation would thus remain as in the Centigrade scale, and the minus sign would be got rid of.

And now, having applied the scale, and having exercised every precaution, can we congratulate ourselves on possessing a perfect instrument? Disheartening as it may appear, the standard instrument of to-day may not be accurate to-morrow. It is more than probable that the freezing-point will become displaced. This curious phenomenon has never been satisfactorily explained. Messrs Negretti and Zambra, in their treatise *On Meteorological Instruments* (a work which abounds with information of a most interesting nature), say in reference to displacement of the freezing-point, that 'either the prolonged effect of the atmospheric pressure upon the thin glass of the bulbs of thermometers, or the gradual restoration of the equilibrium of the particles of the glass after having been greatly disturbed by the operation of boiling the mercury, seems to be the cause of the freezing-points of standard thermometers reading from a few tenths to a degree higher in the course of some years.' To obviate this small error, it is the practice of the makers in question 'to place the tubes aside for about six months before fixing the freezing-point, in order to give time for the glass to regain its former state of aggregation. The making of accurate thermometers is a task attended with many difficulties, the

principal one being the liability of the zero or freezing point varying constantly; so much so, that a thermometer that is perfectly correct to-day, if immersed in boiling-water, will be no longer accurate; at least, it will take some time before it again settles into its normal state. Then, again, if a thermometer is recently blown, filled, and graduated immediately, or at least before some months have elapsed, though every care may have been taken with the production of the instrument, it will require some correction; so that the instrument, however carefully made, should from time to time be plunged into finely-pounded ice, in order to verify the freezing-point.

LORD LYNN'S WIFE.

CHAP. X.—NOT IN THE PROGRAMME.

THEY stood long thus. Neither of the two was in a hurry to break the silence. The music from the ball-room reached them in long gushes of sweet sound, and then died away. Outside the house there was no sound except the jarring cry of a night-bird flitting among the trees, now fast becoming bare of their russet leaves. One other sound there was—a faint rustling, such as the wind might have caused, among the laurels and hollies of the shrubbery; but there was no wind.

Aurelia was quite silent, and so was her companion. But silence is very eloquent sometimes, and each of the two who stood, side by side, on the terrace, knew perfectly well that on the other's ear a casual, indifferent remark would have fallen painfully. Each, by some magnetism of sympathy, seemed conscious of the other's thoughts, and yet no word of love had been uttered.

Lord Lynn felt Aurelia's arm tremble as it rested on his own. He was the first to break the stillness.

'Aurelia,' he said, and as he said it, he took her hand, 'I asked you to come with me here. I had something to say to you. Can you guess what it is?'

No answer. The pretty hand in Lord Lynn's clasp lay quite still and passive. Aurelia's head was turned away. She was gazing into the dark garden, where the lamps gleamed here and there among the trees. The rustling among the laurel-leaves continued.

'I wished, Aurelia, to know my fate; to ask whether the dear prize I have set my heart on winning can be mine. It is not the first time that I have longed to speak as I now speak; but I did not dare to ask, because I felt how blank and wretched the world would seem to me, were I denied. And—it is the old, old story, and is best told in the plain old words. I love you, Aurelia—I have loved you a long time. Can you learn to love me, a little? Will you be mine, my very own, my wife?'

The speaker's voice was low as he uttered these words, but it was very distinct, tremulous as it was with unwonted emotion. Had there been any lurking spy among the thick shrubs beneath, no doubt Lord Lynn's proposal would have reached his ears; but spies, in the nineteenth century, seldom prowl about a peaceful country-house, and the feeble stir and sound among the glossy dark green of the holly-bushes and laurels, which had been merely such as the passage of some bird or animal might have produced, had wholly ceased.

* Mr Balfour Stewart has lately concluded a series of experiments at the Kew Observatory, by which he has accurately determined the freezing-point of mercury. The experiments, conducted with great care, have shown that the freezing-point of mercury, like that of water, is constant, and that it denotes a temperature of -37.93° F. The freezing-point of mercury will now be used as a third point in graduating thermometers which are intended to register extreme temperatures.

Aurelia did not answer. Maidenly reserve might perhaps have sealed her lips, and for the same cause her fair face might have been averted. Or this appearance of bashful coyness might have been the merest feigning, the comedy, older than the Flood, played out by generations of artful women at the moment when the lover they had used every wile to ensnare was brought to their feet at last. But if that last uncharitable supposition were the truth, it was not the whole truth. Supposing that Aurelia, under her cold exterior, felt a thrill of triumph as she heard Lord Lynn tell his love, there was a well-spring of bitterness in her heart that mingled with the worldly exultation of the victory. Why else was the hand that lay in Lord Lynn's so nerveless and chill, that, but for the dainty glove that enclosed it, its cold contact would have been as the touch of a dead woman's hand? Why else did a shiver run through the limbs of the proud beauty as she drank in the avowal of the attachment for which she had schemed and striven? Above all, why else did the one word, 'wife!' lowly murmured, and with almost a moan of anguish, pass her lips? Assuredly there was no acting there. For a moment, Aurelia almost had given up her purpose, as she looked down into the gulf into which she was about to plunge. To reach that gulf, she had plotted and fought her way on, now among thorns, now along paths that seemed strewn with flowers; and now she was on the giddy brink, and she looked down, and it seemed that her fall would be among flowers, too, and that the leap was a safe one, and yet she hesitated. For one brief instant, her good and evil angels strove for the mastery, and it seemed as though the good might prevail. She had done wrong; yes, but perhaps she had not sinned inexplicably; she could draw back, at least, from further guilt.

Lord Lynn spoke again, anxious at her long silence, and auguring ill from it.

'I know,' he said, 'that I am not worthy of you, except that I love you so much. I have wasted the best years of my youth in idle wanderings, and have made little use of the talents, such as they are, which have been given me. My hope was, that with a home as happy and steadfast as mine might be, if you would share it, Aurelia, I might redeem the wasted past, and be of some real use to England, after all. But I see I have been dreaming. You do not care for me; you do not think me worthy of'—

'Hush!' said Aurelia, interrupting him as she turned towards him for the first time, and speaking with quite unusual energy, and in a broken voice that faltered with real emotion—for the most astute of human beings cannot always suppress their feelings—'hush! your words give me pain. You are worthy!—worthy of more than—than I can give.'

Quick as thought now came the eager question, the half-whispered answer:

'You do care for me, then? Dearest, noblest girl—I may hope, may I not?'

'Yes! if it will really make you happy—yes!'

And Lord Lynn's arm encircled Aurelia's waist as he drew her towards him, and called her, along with fifty fond names, such as lovers used before Babel rose, his own, beautiful, glorious wife.

But even at that moment Aurelia turned ashen pale, as one who sees a spectre, and starting back,

pointed to the garden, exclaiming, with a stifled shriek: 'There, there!' An instant afterwards, the flash and report of firearms succeeded to that shriek, and a pistol was discharged from amid the dense shrubs below. With a low moaning cry, Aurelia staggered and fell, a white heap of shining satin and glancing gems and bare white arms on which the bracelets flashed in the pale yellow lamp-light. The man to whom she had just pledged her troth was of tried courage, and had faced death in most shapes, and seen dear comrades struck down at his side, but never had he felt such an agony of terror and pain as now. He sprang back from the edge of the terrace, from which he had caught a glimpse of a dark human form bursting its way recklessly through the matted evergreens, and making for the open lawns. The assassin, whoever he might be, was escaping, but he scarcely gave the wretch a thought; his whole soul was wrapped up in Aurelia's fate. Dead! he believed her to be dead, for she did not speak when he raised her from the ground, addressing her the while in words of the tenderest entreaty, begging for a word, as none could beg but a mother beside her dying child or a lover beside his dying mistress. Dead! Half stupified by the thought, he bore her into the house, meeting numbers of the guests and servants, who came hurrying at the sound of the pistol-shot. He made no answer to their questions; he never stopped or spoke until he reached the ball-room, and laid his fair, insensible burden on a sofa.

Then what a clamour of alarmed voices arose, and next what a hush, a dreadful silence, when none dared, as it were, to speak a word! Dead! surely dead! Yet how beautiful, with an awful beauty she looked, lying there, passive, on the crimson velvet of the sofa, with her haughty head lying helpless on the cushion, her hair loose, and her white face fearfully still and calm. There were stains of blood on her white satin robe, spots of dark tell-tale red on her uncovered neck, and blood was slowly trickling down the white arm that hung loosely down from the edge of the sofa, the rounded, graceful arm, on whose wrist the diamonds glittered still, as in mockery. The oppressive silence was broken by one who had a right to be heard, by poor George Darcy, who came forward, with a great sob, grasped the cold hand, and burst into a passion of tears, such as startled the bystanders, who had seldom given a second thought to the peevish, unpopular man.

'My only child! my own, one lamb! my dear, murdered daughter!'

A great confusion arose; girls and women were sobbing and crying in an anguish of mingled sympathy and terror. Men seemed to speak all at once, loud and angry, and shocked, all questioning, but none able to answer, till some one exclaimed: 'Let me see her! for Heaven's sake, do let me pass. It may not be so bad as they say.'

And the crowd made way gladly for Dr Gillies, the only doctor at the ball, who had come hastening in from the card-room, where the news had reached the whist-party latest of all.

'Dead! no, not dead. I am sure she is alive. I can find no serious wound. The shot, or slugs, or whatever the miscreant used, have only grazed her neck. She has fainted, that is all.'

And the physician's experience was not at fault. The sofa was wheeled to the open window, and

the throng of guests being adjured to stand back, the fresh air, and the cold water the doctor sprinkled on her forehead, produced the usual effect in cases of syncope. Aurelia slightly shivered, moved her arm, and opened her eyes with a heavy sigh.

'Where am I? What has— Is that you, papa? I have been ill, I think, and very troublesome, I am sure.'

And she tried to sit up, but catching sight of the blood-drops on her robe, said with a shudder: 'I remember now: that face,' and nearly swooned again, while old George Darcy was patting and kissing her hand, and crying over it, and talking to her as if she had been a sick child. It was not his custom to be demonstrative in his parental affection; it was not until his child had been rescued, as it seemed, from the jaws of the grave, that he knew how dear she was to him. Lord Lynn stood near the sofa, very pale, and with eyes that were riveted on Aurelia, and watched her with a jealous tenderness, as if he feared to trust the doctor's favourable verdict. He had no avowed and recognised right, as her father had, to tend her in her helpless state, and he feared to agitate her, which in her weak condition might be dangerous. He had said no word since he bore her in, except the one short speech, 'Thank God!' that came from his heart and lips at once, as he heard the assertion of Dr Gillies that Aurelia was alive, and not much hurt. Indeed, the injuries inflicted by the pistol-shot were very trifling, though all agreed that the alarm might well have produced the worst effect.

But now Lord Lynn was assailed by fifty anxious questioners.

'Did you see the man?' 'Were there several of them?' 'Should you know the fellow again?' 'Which way did he go?' 'How was he dressed? Had he a smock-frock or a shirt over his clothes? for if so, he's a poacher;' and so forth.

And almost every one busied himself or herself with conjectures, as to who the would-be murderer could have been, what were his motives, whom could he have designed to injure? Nobody believed that he was an enemy of Aurelia's, personally. How could a young lady, living under her father's roof, in this our age, have enemies? The idea was preposterous!

'Some cross-grained poacher.' 'A drunken rascal, bent on practical joking, and loading his pistol or gun with stones or bits of lead.' 'A ticket-of-leave-man, hoping to rob the house in the confusion.' 'Some mad beggar.'

The last was the most popular hypothesis. It was broached by one of the dragoons from Coventry, and met with immense success; and Lord Lynn was more tormented than ever as he seemed to summon up his reminiscences before replying. At last he spoke, amid perfect silence. All ears were thirsty for his words, and even Aurelia feebly raised herself on her elbow to listen.

'I did see the man; he seemed to have been hidden among the shrubs, and he made a rush for the lawn. He was dressed in dark clothes. I did not see his face at all; I should not know him from Adam.'

There was a flutter and hum of disappointment among the company. Aurelia sank back with a deep sigh, very like a sigh of relief. A dispassionate observer might have said that she really seemed glad that Lord Lynn had failed to identify the assassin. But there were no dispassionate observers there; even the doctor was in error.

'You are tired and faint, my dear young lady; and no wonder. The sooner you get to your own room, and to bed, the better. Could you walk with help, or shall we carry you?'

'Thank you, Dr Gillies; I can walk, I am sure. But you make me out worse than I am. It was nothing—only the sudden shock, and I was silly. I never was so foolish before; and I have stopped the dancing, and spoiled everything. O how silly of me!—and how kind you all are! I really beg your pardon, dear Lady Midgett,' said Aurelia, smiling with sickly white lips, and making a weak effort to rise.

'O dear Miss Darcy, pray, pray, don't. We are only concerned for you; indeed, that is all; and how thankful we are it is now all happily and mercifully over, and no real great harm done to you—and after such a pleasant, delightful evening! O we should never have forgiven ourselves!' Fifty female voices said these words as with one breath; and they crowded about Aurelia, and would have smothered her with well-meant caresses, but for the doctor's stern authority. As for Lucy Mainwaring, she took Aurelia's hand and kissed it, weeping the while. She saw nothing in her but a dear friend, brought back to her by calamity, not a rival. There was no rivalry in Lucy's heart. But by this time Lord Lynn had rallied his faculties, more disturbed by Aurelia's danger than the keen, tried soldier could have thought possible.

'Get lanterns, gentlemen,' he said. 'Get some of the horses in the stables saddled; and send some one to the village to tell the young fellows to turn out and hunt down that villain. A large reward, you can say, will'—

'The Home Secretary will no doubt offer a reward—a hundred pounds, I dare say,' said Sir Joseph, the county member, looking magisterial.

'I will give the reward myself—not one, but five hundred pounds, to the person who captures that scoundrel,' said Lord Lynn. 'But talking is useless. Don't disturb Mr Darcy, but pray, send word to the village, and let us search the garden. The Indians in the Far West taught me to follow a trail, and it is strange if he has left no footprints in the soft mould. Who will go with me?'

'Stop, stop!' cried Aurelia wildly. 'Do not follow him. Pray, let him go. Poor wretch! He is mad, perhaps. It may be a mistake. Do not hurt him. Let him go, please let him go.'

'The sooner we get Miss Darcy away, the better,' said the doctor knowingly; 'this is too much for any lady's nerves.' The doctor triumphed; and Aurelia, reluctant as she was, was removed to her own room; while a number of gentlemen, among whom some young Nimrods of the county vied with the officers from Coventry in zeal, followed Lord Lynn to the garden. The Guardsman had not made an idle boast of his own powers in tracking a foe. He soon found, among the branches of the evergreens, the blackened wadding of the discharged pistol, and near it footprints deeply stamped into the mossy mould of the garden. These he carefully examined, measured, and proceeded to follow out through the course which the fugitive had pursued when he rushed from the covert. But Lord Lynn, like many another adventurer, was checkmated by the unseasonable ardour of his friends. Had his companions been his old allies, the Big Buffalo, the Black Fox, and other Pawnee or Sioux warriors, or had the

young nobleman been alone, all might have been well; but it was found that the Coventry officers and the sporting squires had so trampled the flower-beds and turf, scouring lawns and beating thickets with whoop and halloo, with twinkling lanterns and flaring candles, that Chingachgook himself would have been baffled in such a quest. The trail was hopelessly lost.

'We shall catch him to-morrow. The police will put salt on his tail, no fear!' Such were the consolatory assurances of the male part of the company. The carriages rolled up in a long file, and the guests drove off. The Mainwarings lingered to the last. Lucy, with the hood of her scarlet mantle drawn over her pretty head, came to meet her cousin, her honest brown eyes smiling through tears.

'She is better, Hastings,' said the sweet girl artlessly; 'the doctor says she will soon be well now. She has fallen asleep, the housekeeper told me, and sleeps quite gently, like a child, quite worn out, poor thing. I was so glad—so glad.'

Lord Lynn turned his own face away from Lucy as he took both her hands and pressed them gratefully. He was very much moved, and he did not wish Lucy to see how much. Perhaps some dim struggling idea was in his mind that he had behaved ill, or at least imprudently, in courting the society of this girl, his kinswoman, as he had done. How she came to him in her unselfish trouble for another! There was no mean jealousy there, neither was there any consciousness in her tone or manner, to tell that she knew why he, of all others, should be interested in Aurelia. There was nothing there but sheer innocent kindness. How, if she should have taken his attentions for more than they were worth? How, if— Absurd!

'Lucy, you are a dear, good girl. Thank you. Few men ever had such a darling little sister as you are. Good-night; I shall see you to-morrow.'

And he was gone. Lucy thought of his words hours afterwards, when Chanticleer's faint cry came from the home-farm, and the day was dawning gray to eastward. Yes, he was very kind, and he had pressed her hands, and his voice had been quite trembling, and unlike what it usually was. Did that mean that he loved her? Or was it only his pity for poor Aurelia Darcy's great danger? Sister! Why did he say that? But he had spoken tenderly; and Lucy fell asleep again, and her dreams were happy dreams.

CHAPTER XL.—BAFFLED.

For some days after the event which had been so near crowning the festivities of the Beechborough ball with a tragic and melancholy ending, Aurelia lay helpless and worn out upon her down pillows, like a hurt bird that has reached the nest only to die there. Not that her life was in any real danger from the slight injuries which the pistol-shot had inflicted. The slugs, five or six of which had been picked up on the terrace, flattened by striking against the wall, had but grazed her neck; and even the loss of blood was but trifling. Mr Killick and Mr Barker, called in to consult with Dr Gillies, agreed more cordially than doctors often agree, that no bad consequences need be feared, narrow as the escape from death had been.

But Aurelia's nerves had been prostrated by the terrible shock; prostrated to an extent doubly

surprising in that magnificent organisation, so firm in health and vigour of body and mind. So it was, however. She, who had scarcely known a day's illness since her infancy, whose serene calmness was a proverb in the household, and whose strong will was recognised by all who approached her, now lay weak and ghastly, scarcely able to converse even with her father, who spent most of the day at her bedside, reading to her, doing his clumsy best to settle her pillows beneath the restless, uneasy head, and quite scared at the change that had come over her.

It follows as a matter of course that Miss Darcy was quite unable to receive any of the visitors who drove or rode over to the Hall to inquire after her health, or even to reply to any of the numerous kind notes and messages that poured in from all quarters of the compass. I think people liked Aurelia better, now that she was thus brought low by suffering, than ever they had done when they saw her in the pride of her youth and beauty, like some deep-rooted column that seems to bid defiance to tempest and earthquake. Certain it is that they were really sorry for her, and unfeignedly hoped to hear of her recovery. Lord Lynn came every day, and even twice a day. Hollingsley is a good twelve miles from Beechborough, but the young nobleman always seemed to have business which took him some miles further into the country, and he could call at Beechborough on his way back, late in the day, and did so. The servants at the Hall smirked and nodded significantly at one another as they commented on the young man's frequent visits. But his groom could have told them—only that the groom who rode after Lord Lynn was an ex-soldier of his lordship's company of the Foot Guards, and too well drilled into discretion and obedience for such idle tattlings—could have told them that Lord Lynn's ride extended no further than a lonely inn at Grove Ferry, three miles off, much haunted by anglers in summer, and that there he put up his horses, and rambled aimlessly along the river-banks, killing time, until the sluggish hours had brought round the moment when he could decently canter again into George Darcy's demesne, and again ask the gray-haired butler for news of Miss Darcy.

Once Aurelia, whose sense of hearing was morbidly sharpened by the condition of her health, heard her lover's voice at the Hall-door, and the ringing of his bridle, and the pawing of his horse's hoof upon the gravel. She sent her father down to speak to him; and it was a comfort to Lord Lynn to converse for a minute with George Darcy, because he had just left Aurelia. For the rest, Hastings, Baron Lynn, led but an anxious, uncomfortable life of it. He avoided his friends, even the Mainwarings. Some feeling, the nature of which he hardly divined, kept him away from Stoke. Lucy waited in vain; he never came; but his chief occupation was waylaying Dr Gillies, who drove over daily with post-horses from the town where he lived and practised. The young lord was always meeting Dr Gillies on his return-journey, now on the rushy common at Bittenham, now on the broad flint-strewn road near Redbarns, now on the wooded hill of Nutcop, where many a highwayman had lurked in George III.'s time. The very postilions learned to pull up their nags by instinct, when they saw Lord Lynn; and the old physician's eye always twinkled sily as he

responded to the young man's questions. Dr Gillies had eyes to see into such a millstone as that of this excessive interest on the part of a man of eight or nine and twenty for a beautiful patient of his.

Miss Crawse came over, and earnestly begged to see her once intimate friend. Her visit was kindly meant. If Aurelia would have let her in, she would have found that Miss Crawse, softened for the moment, had left Self behind her in her pilgrimage from Patcham Cross Roads. Not a word would have been spoken of Tom's blighted aspirations as a paymaster, nor of Willie's expensive cramming for the Civil Service of his country. But Aurelia would not see Miss Crawse, shewed an invalid's petulance and repugnance at the mention of her name, and begged her father to go down and get rid of the tiresome intruder; a commission which George Darcy executed with more docility than tact. Miss Crawse, feeling her well-meant advances snubbed—she had sent up a note offering to nurse Aurelia, and saying with perfect truth that she had been accustomed to be useful and quiet in a sick-chamber from very early days—went home in dudgeon; and Self, that vicarious selfishness on behalf of her kith and kin, which she hallowed as a virtue, resumed dominion over her. She resolved to await Aurelia's recovery—it would be but humane to delay thus far—and then!

Lucy Mainwaring had made a similar offer to that of Miss Crawse. It seemed natural to make it, on the part of those who had known the Darcies well, and who pityingly remembered that Aurelia had no mother, sister, or female relative to be beside her in sickness—only servants, and her father, who was a sorry nurse, for all his affection and sympathy. But Aurelia said No to this proffer too, only that the refusal was more courteously conveyed. She should get on very well, she was sure, with Jennings, her maid, and Mrs Stark, the housekeeper, an experienced woman. Mrs Stark was aunt to Jennings, and therefore those two were confidential with one another, instead of being sworn foes, as is commonly the case between two such high feminine officials in a large household.

'I went into Miss Aurelia's room,' said Mrs Stark over a cup of tea, 'and I had my list-slippers on, of course, and was particular careful about noise; so I couldn't be heard, no more than the cat could. And I was close to the bed-curtains, and I heard her talking to herself in a moan, like. "That face! ah, that face!" That was all she said, but the way she said it made my flesh creep, I can tell you. Then I suppose I gave a start, for she said: "Is that you, Stark?" and of course there was an end of it. A curious thing, wasn't it?'

'Very curious!' said Jennings thoughtfully, letting the cambric she was hemming drop on her lap. 'I never could make her out; she's as close as wax; but I suspect she has something on her mind. That early walk she took, wetting her feet before breakfast, and never caring, wasn't natural. She's a deep one; but she isn't quite right, somehow.'

There were other visitors, however, whom Aurelia evinced a strange wish to see, when once she was sufficiently recovered to go down stairs leaning on Mr Darcy's arm, and to sit propped with cushions in a deep arm-chair in the Oak Room. Her father

did not like her to see the visitors above mentioned, lest their reports and the associations thereby suggested should prove perniciously agitating to her nerves; but she insisted, and carried her point. Some of these visitors wore blue coats, elaborately braided all over the front; others were in blue coats with white letters on the collars, and stripes on the arms; and others were in plain clothes, but had thick Blucher boots, and red cotton handkerchiefs in the crowns of their hats. In a word, they all belonged to the police.

For the first time in his life almost, George Cook Darcy, *né* Hanks, had had his own way. Contrary to Aurelia's feeble entreaties, he had caused handbills to be posted up far and near, on dead-wall, and barn gable, and roadside oak, offering rewards for the apprehension of the man who had lurked in the shrubbery, and fired the pistol at Aurelia. He had communicated with the county police, had corresponded with Scotland Yard, and had egged on Sir Joseph to memorialise the Home Office. Her Majesty's government had offered a hundred pounds for the capture and conviction of the would-be murderer, described in bureaucratic language as 'some person or persons unknown'; and as Lord Lynn's offer of five hundred for the same result was known to the constabulary, every blue-coat in the service of Madam Justice was doing his best to secure the prize. Inspectors, sergeants, detectives, and superintendents, local and metropolitan, came and went, sniffing and ferreting about the country, like hounds on a cold scent; but though several suspicious-looking persons were apprehended, alibis were proved in every case.

It was remarkable with what interest Aurelia listened to these professional persons as they disconsolately related to their paymaster and employer the efforts they had made, and the utter futility of their researches; and Mr Darcy was almost provoked by the evident pleasure, inexplicable to him, with which his daughter heard of the assassin's continued impunity.

'I always told you, papa, that I wished the poor wretch to go free. He has not done much harm. I daresay it was a mistake. I forgive him from my heart, and I do wish you would let the matter rest.'

So she said. Very Christian, and very proper, this forgiving spirit, Mr Darcy thought; but he was of more earthly mould, and would very much have liked to see the villain swinging in the air, below the platform on the roof of Warwick jail; or, if that were impracticable, at least safely caged for life. But these hopes seemed doomed to disappointment, for one day one of the smartest of the county police-officers, who had played his part with a sleuth-hound's stanchness throughout, entered the Oak Room. It was evident from the man's face that he had something to tell, and his tale was briefly this. At a place called Grove Ferry, on the river-bank, he had seen some children trying with long sticks to fish something black out of the water, where it was floating among the sedges. This object attracted the policeman's eye, always on the look-out for any seeming trifles that might be of use in his quest, and he soon contrived to draw it out of the river. It proved to be a man's hat, wet and sodden by long immersion, and crushed out of shape, but quite distinguishable.

'A silk-hat,' observed the sergeant, telling off

the points on his fingers: 'very decent sort of tile, but not fashionable; not such as a swell would wear. Maker's name, O'Shaughnessy, Dublin. So the customer we are looking after has most likely been lately in Ireland. We shall write to Dublin, of course, and try to find out the purchaser of the hat, though the number is hard to make out. Perhaps you, sir, or the young lady, may guess who did the trick, now we know the hat to be Irish.'

Aurelia, at this appeal, made a slight sign of dissent. Mr Darcy snapped at the speaker: 'Ireland! what has that to do with it? How do you know that the owner of the hat had anything to do with the late wicked outrage here?'

The sergeant smiled contemptuously behind his white Berlin glove. He had seen Mr Darcy once or twice, and had a poor opinion of that gentleman's acuteness; but he set to work, with respectful gravity, to explain: 'I mentioned before, sir, when I had the honour to be admitted, that we had found some traces of the party in your garden, among the laurels where the pistol was fired. The garden had been so stamped and cut about by folks tramping here and there, looking for the party, that to track any cove there was like hunting for a needle in hay. But there were five very good plain footprints found among the laurels, in a place some way off, where the burned pistol-wadding was picked up, and where nobody had rampaged about as they had elsewhere. These five footprints were all cut carefully out, and carried to the station as gingerly as if they'd been spun-glass, and we divided them. I got a plaster of Paris cast made of the one that fell to my share, and I studied it, and examined it, and spent my spare minutes a-thinking about it, until I felt quite sure I could pick it out of a thousand. There was a particular high heel to the boot that made it, a high heel and a thinnish sole; French-made boots, I reckon; but that any charity-boy could have made out for himself. What I did notice was, that the heel was a good deal worn away on one side, and yet the boot wasn't trodden out of shape, as often happens. I should guess that the party it belonged to had a trick of drumming on the ground with his foot, bringing the heel down upon a stone or a block of wood, or what not, while he was thinking, or talking, or'—

Aurelia made a slight but abrupt motion forwards, a very trifling start; but it was the policeman's business to see small signs, and he saw this, though Mr Darcy did not.

'Beg your pardon, miss. I fancied you had remembered something to give us a clue. Perhaps you have known somebody who had such a habit as that?'

But Aurelia's voice was perfectly composed as she said that Sergeant Miller was mistaken; she was merely surprised at the adroitness that could extract evidence from such trifles. The active officer swallowed the compliment as a pike bolts a minnow. He bowed, and chuckled before he went on to say that he knew the footprint so accurately, that when he had drawn the hat ashore, and had proceeded to inspect the moist turf of the bank, low and swampy in that place, he had instantly recognised certain half-effaced marks, leading to the river, as caused by the same tread which had left its impression in the shrubbery.

'The steps went to the river,' said the sergeant

impressively; 'but never a one came back. The chap was not right in his head, we all feel sure of that. Mad or drunk he must have been, for no cracksmen in his senses would have behaved so; and though there are plenty of ill-conditioned scamps at liberty, no one could have had a grudge against the young lady, that's certain. Once the superintendent fancied it was my lord the shot was intended for, but that's not likely. His lordship has been half his life abroad, don't preserve to speak of, don't act as a magistrate, nor nothing. The chap that we're after is just mad, was, at least, for it's my belief he's drowned himself.'

George Darcy was quite shocked. He thought the gallows a fit doom for any man, in his right mind, who should have attempted to cut short his daughter's young life by a wanton act of spite or revenge. But the idea of some poor creature of disordered intellect making the murderous attempt, and then escaping human chastisement by a self-inflicted death, horrified the master of Beechborough. The sergeant went on: 'Drowned! It's the first idea comes into the head of a poor crazy creature in trouble to go and get rest at the bottom of the black water; and it's likely enough that this one did as they mostly do. We got the drags, and we dragged every yard of the river for half a mile or more; and we found nothing. But there came a fresh the day after your ball, sir, and there was rain enough, and flood enough, to wash the body half-way to the sea. Most probably he'll never be found now.'

'Then you really—think—he is—is dead—drowned?' Aurelia's gray eyes looked larger than usual, and her white face more drawn and eager as she asked this.

Her father begged her not to excite herself.

The sergeant eyed her stealthily before he answered, weighing every word: 'Miss, I do believe it; so do we all. 'Tis not my fancy, but the judgment of every one of the superior officers among us, as well as the London gentlemen from the Yard. He's dead and drowned, poor chap.'

'Poor wretch, poor wretch! Heaven help and forgive him! Heaven pity him! O what have I done!' broke out Aurelia in a hoarse harsh tone, quite unlike the usual soft music that dropped from her lips; and a few great tears gathered in her eyes, and blinded her, to her father's surprise, for she did not weep, as most girls do, easily and for light cause. It took as much grief or pain to dim Aurelia's gray eyes as it does to wring tears from a strong man. Impatiently, angrily, she bit her lip till it bled, and dashed the drops away with her weak hand. 'I—was—shocked: it is over now,' she said slowly, and gave her father a look which, for a wonder, he understood; and thereupon the policeman was fed and civilly dismissed.

'You have agitated yourself too much, my love,' said her father chidingly; 'it was wrong, very wrong. What would Dr Gillies say?'

'No, papa, for I feel better already. I shall get well and strong very soon now, you will see. I know I am a true prophet!' And Aurelia laughed, but there was no music in her laugh.

Meanwhile the police-sergeant, jolting home in his gig, muttered this soliloquy: 'Something amiss with that young lady. A screw loose, or I'm not John Miller. She knows more than she cares to tell. Pooh! that's an old story with

women. Mr D. behaved decently, though. Ten sova besides expenses. We share at the station; I suppose that I ought to pouch half!

HABITS AND HAUNTS OF THE CAMEL.

EXTRAORDINARY errors are still in circulation respecting the character, and even the structure of the camel, notwithstanding it has been the companion of man from the earliest ages of his existence. The large, heavy, lumbering animal that bears burdens is supposed to constitute a species apart from the light and agile dromedary, which, in the language of the Chinese, possesses feet of wind, and in traversing the desert, often performs journeys of from ninety to a hundred miles a day. This was proved on a remarkable occasion in Egypt. The Pacha, on his way to the Hejaz, having learned at Suer that a mutiny had broken out among the troops in Cairo, turned westwards the head of his dromedary, and in less than eight hours cleared the ninety miles of desert, and appeared suddenly among the rebels, who were instantly awed into submission by his daring presence. A few heads, however, were struck off, by way of precaution, after which his Highness resumed his pilgrimage towards the Holy City. Any one who contemplates the sumpter animal of the trading caravans, shuffling along the sandy tracts of the desert at the rate of two miles and a half an hour, with twelve hundred-weight of merchandise on his back, may be easily pardoned for coming to the conclusion that this drowsy beast must be of a different species from the bold and fleet creature, which, on the plains of Northern India, moves at the rate of eighteen miles an hour, with a light piece of artillery at his heels. Yet there is no more difference between the sumpter camel and the fleet dromedary, than between the dray horse and Childers' steed, which flew over the turf of Newmarket at the rate of a mile a minute. The speed and lightness of the dromedary originate in accident, and are developed by training and education; but the saddle animal will cross with the beast of burden, and produce a new variety, more useful in many respects than either parent.

Still it seems necessary to admit that the Bactrian camel, with two hunches, which traverses the wilds and vast elevated plateaux of Central Asia, differs specifically from the Arabian camel with one hunch. Of these we have sometimes beheld a string, exceeding a thousand in number, intermingled with dromedaries—the latter mounted, the former laden—tied to each other, and proceeding in single-file athwart the wastes of Libya towards the Black Countries. The march in such cases seems tedious, and would really be so to an impatient traveller; but to persons who, like the Arab merchants, pass the greater part of their lives with camels amid the sands, the slowness of progression is no more irksome than the ordinary course of business to a man in the city. They know by experience how far they can advance in a day, in what places they shall find water, date-palms, and coarse pasturage for their beasts, and creep from station to station without the least excitement or impatience. The small incidents of the way suffice to amuse them, though occasionally they are of such a nature as to put their manhood to the proof, and violently stimulate their circulation. A lion, perhaps, in search of a meal, starts up from amid the sand-hills, or emerges from an

unnoticed ravine, and bounds fearlessly towards the caravan, resolved to gratify his appetite, or perish—nothing scares him or arrests his progress—despising both dromedary and rider, he springs with a roar towards his prey, and in spite of spears and the contents of rifles, often succeeds in bringing to the ground the individual he has marked out for his breakfast. But soldier or trader, the Arab is always brave, and never deserts a friend in need. With such weapons as are at hand, therefore, the merchants rush upon their assailant, firing, shouting, vociferating, and almost invariably end by leaving his lifeless body upon the sands; insulting him, meanwhile, with the epithets of 'dog' and 'son of a dog.' Should he have killed one of their companions, the caravan halts, a shallow grave is dug, and the body, with the head towards Mecca, is deposited in it, after which a mound is thrown up to mark the spot. Sometimes the wind disperses such mounds in the course of a few hours, though generally it adds to their bulk and elevation by heaping upon them incessantly fresh particles. In spots where there exists any moisture, plants spring up and envelop these heaps with a network of tough fibrous roots, so that they become permanent, and serve at distant intervals to designate the route of the caravans. Bones of camels, horses, and asses, broken pottery, and empty bottles, likewise assist for a short time to instruct the Arab in the way towards the interior, though the occurrence of two or three violent sand-storms suffices to obliterate these traces of man's passage through the wilderness.

The camel, not being himself sociable, is averse from encouraging sociability in others. It is only after much toil, and a vigorous application of the whip, that this stubborn animal can be made to move in line with individuals of his own species; though both in India and Africa the enterprise has been accomplished—in the former country, by the creation of a camel-train, in the latter, by accustoming the dromedary to military evolutions; to charge and retreat in compact bodies, and otherwise to imitate all the movements of cavalry. But your trading camel having acquired different habits, far exceeds a mule in obstinacy when you attempt to break through them; he will then oppose to your will a passive resistance utterly unconquerable; will lie down if he thinks you have put too much on his back, and refuse to rise though you should beat him to death. To shew that this is often a mere crotchety, the Arabs remove two or three small packets from the load; upon which the animal, no doubt with an inward chuckle of satisfaction at having gained the victory, gives a loud grunt, and rises without perceiving that, during the operation, the packages have been restored. As, however, he believes his load to have been lightened, he trudges along merrily, if so sullen a beast can ever be said to be merry. But though serious and gloomy, this patient creature must not be supposed to be entirely without sentiment. When kindly treated, when patted on the shoulder, when gently spoken to, but more especially when treated to a song, the dromedary will exhibit strong signs of pleasure in his prominent eye, will turn round his long snake-like neck, look at you steadfastly, as if to express his thanks, and then gaze forth upon the outspread desert more proudly than before. This disposition we often noticed in a white female camel big with young,

on which we traversed a portion of the Sahara. In form, lightness, and symmetry, it was one of the most delicate of its species, rising at the top of the hunch to above eight feet in height, so that while riding through the streets of Cairo, we could look into the harems through the first-floor windows.

In cities, in fairs, or other much-frequented places, the camel seems habitually dull; but no sooner does he find himself in the desert, than his spirits return; he snuffs the sweet air, he looks gladly over the unimpeded landscape, he feels himself at home; and if his rider be familiar to him, trots away at the rate of twelve or thirteen miles an hour without the least urging. In cases of necessity, he can, as we have already remarked, knock off eighteen or twenty miles in the same period. One of the pleasures of this mode of travelling, not often noticed, is the great height of the rider from the ground, preserving him from the fierce heat reflected from the sand, which on an ass, or even on a horse, sometimes scorches the face; but aloft on the camel's saddle, the air is comparatively cool, and rendered more so by the swift pace of the animal. Owing to the structure of his foot, he does not sink in the sand, but spreading the sole as he goes, appears to fly over the surface rather than to gallop. Although his eye appears dull, his sight is long and piercing; and in the fineness of the sense of smelling, is perhaps exceeded by no other animal, since he can scent water, which has scarcely any odour at all, at the distance of a mile and a half, or two miles: we should even say, from observation, that he can scent it more than twice as far, for, on approaching the Nile from the desert, we have known him voluntarily to quicken his pace at the distance of four or five miles. The delight imparted by immense heat, which appears to confer upon some individuals a sixth sense, will continue during eight or ten hours, bubbling, seething, and thrilling through the frame like a sublime intoxication; but by degrees weariness and languor succeed, thirst makes itself felt, and as the sun nods towards the west, the eye glances about wistfully in search of a clump of palm-trees or a rock, the usual indications of a fountain. Upon discovering the well-known signal, the dromedary rears his head, turns, gives his rider a look of encouragement, and then, if not quite subdued by fatigue, bolts off at full speed. How many days he can go without drinking, has never perhaps been exactly ascertained—in fact, the power of endurance varies greatly in different individuals—but it has been stated, on very good authority, that the dromedary can subsist nine days without water, though exposed the whole time to a heat resembling that of a furnace. It is certain that when the camel does drink, he always appears to be laying in a stock for a week or so, and he has even been known to swallow seven gallons and a half, or thirty quarts of water at one time. This allows three quarts a day for ten days, which, though not sufficient properly to quench the thirst of so large an animal, may yet be enough to keep him alive. Comparative anatomy, which has indulged in a legion of experiments on the structure of much inferior animals, has not extended a proper degree of attention to the camel. It has, no doubt, been ascertained that this extraordinary creature possesses one stomach more than other mammalia; but curiosity has not been

sufficiently busy with that immense bladder, streaked with sanguine veins, which the animal sometimes blows out of its mouth in spring. In strings of thirty or forty, we have noticed, during the greatest heat of the day, a majority amusing themselves after this fashion. On such occasions, they will raise their heads, look around wildly, and then, with a strange offensive noise, draw up the bag from their throats, and blow it out inflated to its fullest extent, as if to cool it by the touch of the external air. In a few minutes they would suffer it to collapse, and suck it back with a ruckling noise into their throats. Is not this bag intended to contain, in addition to the fifth stomach, a supply of fresh water? And is it not in this that travellers, when compelled to kill their dromedaries to preserve their own lives in the Sahara, find the pure transparent fluid spoken of on such occasions? The water in the fifth stomach is never, we believe, found upon dissection to be quite clear, but in some cells a little muddy, in others yellow.

It is during a sand-storm, or on the approach of the simoom, that the camel displays the most striking proofs of sagacity. Before the human eye can detect the swiftly-approaching column of yellow or lurid gas which instantly strikes dead all creatures that breathe it, the camel discerns the danger, and uttering a wild roar, turns round and plunges his nose into the sand. The traveller also, who springs instantly to the earth, presses his face against the face of the desert, tightly closes his lips, and protects his nostrils with both hands. What signs of suffering or agitation the poor dromedary exhibits, the traveller is too much terrified to observe, but he himself experiences throughout his frame, first a quivering shooting-pain, then a numbness and paralysis of all the limbs and vital functions, which prolonged for many seconds would be death. But the mysterious vapour which comes almost like lightning, in the same manner departs. In many cases, the sudden death of the beast and his rider reveals the fatal power of the simoom; but when they escape with life, the process of reviving from the stroke resembles that experienced by patients after a long illness—languor, feebleness, prostration of the whole system, giddiness of the head, dimness of sight, a partial loss of memory, and a bewilderment of ideas. Europeans flee to brandy as a remedy, the Arabs to coffee; while the camel, kneeling as if under a heavy burden, groans, grunts, and looks ruefully about upon the waste.

One means of keeping up the strength of this faithful beast, which seems never to have occurred to the inhabitants of Eastern Africa, or else to be neglected through indolence, is habitually practised in the Moggreb or Western Desert: the owner going before, or a little on one side, breaks or plucks up whatever shrub or plant he perceives suited to the camel's taste, and gives it to him as he walks along; and the vegetable juices thus obtained supply the want of water. Another great advantage arises from this policy of the Moggrebyns: it produces a kindly feeling, closely resembling affection, between the master and his beast, and inspires the latter with so much trust and confidence, that when for whole days nothing is given him, he seems to understand that it is only because there is nothing to be had.

Some naturalists have given currency to the opinion that the camel is not found in India; but

this is an error, since in all ages it has abounded in the great sandy plains north of the Nerbuddah, where, in the time of Akhbar, it constituted the sole wealth of some tribes, individuals among whom were said to possess herds of ten thousand. In Persia, in Khorasan, in Asia Minor, in the Crimea, on the plains of the Kuban, throughout the steppes of Central Asia, and in China, the camel is the common beast of burden. Mongol nobles journey on dromedaries to the court of Peking, and sometimes harness them to carriages. When ladies travel, whether in Northern or Southern Asia, their favourite mount is the camel, on which they are placed in a very peculiar manner: two capacious panniers are slung, one on either side the animal, furnished with soft cushions. In these, two ladies seat themselves, and are protected from the sun's rays by a silken canopy, supported on slender gilded poles rising from the corners of the panniers. Here at their ease they chat with each other, smoke, or nurse their babies, and are occasionally lulled to sleep by the drowsy motion of the animal.

The young foal of the camel, when frisking after his mother, has a sort of ungainly prettiness, which is almost comic, especially when the owner determines upon weaning it. A coarse net-work of rope is then tied over the dam's breasts, against which the young camel, in search of his usual nourishment, dashes his nose in a sort of petulant fury. He will go on, however, making attempts for about eight or ten days, after which he coolly abandons the enterprise, and takes to ordinary food, thorns and thistles, and the coarsest herbage produced by the sterile soil of the desert. To reconcile the young camel to his lot, the Kirghis adorn his head with gay-coloured ribbons and long streamers, which, as he gambols about, dance and flutter in the air. Camel's milk, in all the countries where the animal flourishes, is an article in great request, both as a beverage and for the purpose of making cheese and butter; but it does not seem to yield that strong spirit which is extracted from mare's milk in all parts of Tartary, and enables the wandering hordes to enjoy the delights of intoxication. In Arabia and Northern Africa, the fine hair of the camel, which the animal sheds once a year, is woven into fabrics little less soft and beautiful than the shawls of Cashmere. A white burnoose of this material, manufactured in Tunis or Fez, hooded and tasselled with floss silk, sometimes sells in the bazaars of Cairo or Damascus for twenty-five or thirty pounds, according to its whiteness and lustre. Nor is this at all surprising, since very few camels are white, the common colour being brown, varying occasionally almost to black. Of the coarse, long hair, which, as in the shawl-goat, covers and conceals the down, ropes and tents are made. Hence the expression which occurs perpetually in the Arab poets, 'the black tents of Oman or Nejed'; and in the Songs of Solomon, 'the black tents of Kedar.'

The camel is said to be found wild in the deserts lying east of the Himalaya. But this may be doubted, since the animal shuns forests, and there is no steppe of sufficient extent to withdraw crowds of so large a beast from the notice of man. It is equally erroneous to regard him as a native of Tibet, a country so lofty, cold, and desolate that even the shaggy horse of Britain finds it difficult to subsist there. It may safely be affirmed that

the camel exists everywhere in bondage—sometimes the slave of the slave, but always industrious, patient, and addicted to toil. We have seen him harnessed to the plough with an ass, and drawing a cart side by side with a buffalo; we have beheld him move through the eternal gyrations of a water-wheel assisted by a skeleton of a horse; but his proper place is the desert, where both he and his rider are exhilarated by the buoyant and elastic air. The only inconvenience attending the use of the camel as a saddle-animal is the awkwardness of mounting or descending. He squats on the ground, and you get into the saddle; you utter a sound which no combination of letters can represent, and up he starts, first with his hind-legs, which nearly pitches you over his head, and then with his fore-legs, which sends you back with equal violence. In dismounting, it is much the same—you utter the mysterious guttural sound, and down he goes, plump, doubling his fore-legs under him, and then quietly bringing the hind-legs to bear in the same long folds; after which he lies at his ease and begins to ruminate whether your neck be broken or not. With all his faults, however, we regard him as a friend, since we have seldom passed pleasanter hours than those spent in the burning sun upon his back, with the golden sand beneath, and a boundless horizon before us.

OUT AT SEA.

THREE months at sea, and one on shore;

Three months at sea—yet not afloat:

Around our home the breakers roar,

Yet own we neither ship nor boat.

Rock-based, amid the swirl of foam,

The light-house stands—it is our home.

Three months at sea—a dreary time—

The ship goes gaily on its way;

Now and again a mellow chime

Comes to us, through the dash of spray.

The ship will reach the nether zone

While we still pace the light-house lone.

While we still pace, and hear the sound

That comes from yon far village spire,

Where wife and children gather round

The cheery board, the crackling fire;

Or seaward gaze, at dead of night,

To watch our slow, revolving light.

The skipper, through the midnight haze,

Marks well its gleam, and feels its worth.

'God's blessing on the light!' he says,

But gives it still a wider berth.

And so it shines, from sun to sun,

A thing to bless, and yet to shun.

And when the tempests howl and rave,

And driving clouds shut out the day,

And o'er the lantern top the wave

Flies skyward into feathered spray,

We laugh, my comrades twain and I,

To feel ourselves so warm and dry.

The light-house quivers to its base,

Yet, snug within, we know no fears;

We know its stones could fearless face

Still stouter gales in bygone years.

Thank God, our lot is not amiss,

There's many a life far worse than this.

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